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THE
DANGER AND HOPE
OF
THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:
A
DISCOURSE

ON THE DAY OF THE ANNUAL THANKSGIVING, IN THE
STATE OF NEW-YORK.

BY GARDINER SPRING,

Pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church, in the city of New-York.

NEW-YORK :
JOHN F. TROW, PRINTER, 114 NASSAU-STREET.
A. D. 1843.

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A DISCOURSE.

PSALM 46: 1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

EVERY man is responsible not only for what he says and does, but for what he neglects to say and do. God and his fellow-men hold him responsible; and though he himself may scarcely survive either the good he implores, or the evil he deprecates, he is responsible to those who come after him.

There are great political axioms that are independent of party interests, and alike relevant to all parties. While the pulpit is not the arena of political debate, and ought never to be diverted from its peaceful character to the purposes of secular controversy, yet is there no such mutual and instinctive antipathy between the gospel of the Son of God, and the great interests of the nation, that these interests may not, on some occasions, be befitting topics of consideration in the Sacred Desk. Is there not rather an obligation on the ministers of religion, if there are dangers that threaten the commonwealth, to speak of them; and, if such there be,

to speak also of well-grounded hopes in the midst of these dangers, and a refuge from them? And may not some such view, especially at the present crisis, enable us to take a more extended survey of the motives to that thankful spirit which our present meeting is designed to express and promote? It is to these two topics, therefore, that I respectfully solicit your attention in this discourse—THE DANGER AND THE HOPE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE; desirous that both may be appreciated, and that, with a heart of fervent gratitude, we may the better appreciate the composing and inspiring thought, that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

We will,

I. Direct our thoughts to some of the dangers which threaten the American people.

I say the dangers which threaten the American *people*, because, though it is almost an anomaly in the history of the world, the American people, in a high sense, constitute the American government. The destiny of this nation is in the hands of the people. If we have not good rulers, wholesome laws, and a good government, it is the fault of the people. The character of the people decides the destiny of the nation. The institutions and laws of most other lands exert an original influence in forming the national character; while in this land the people themselves form the institutions and laws, and are influenced by them only as they are the creatures of their own making. Nothing is more obvious, therefore, than that the social order and

permanent prosperity of a nation, constituted as our own is constituted, are chiefly jeopardd by evils which breathe their poison into the elements of society, affect public opinion, and corrupt the mass of the people. Other sources of apprehension are theoretical, distant, and imaginary; these are real, present, and practical. And among them may be specified,

1. The violence and rancour of the spirit of party.

Of the existence and prevalence of this mischievous spirit most are conscious; while by all good men it is bitterly bewailed. Men may have honest differences of opinion in politics. We have no serious fears from these differences, where they are founded in principle; for, where the designs of men are honest, even though they may be mistaken, they rarely suffer themselves to be carried beyond the bounds of reason. It is when the spirit of party has for its object less worthy aims than the great principles of government—is not so much the laws of the land as the men who shall administer them—not so much the country as the party, the pride of power, and the honours and immunities of office, that it excites apprehension and alarm, and threatens lasting evil. Blind passion, hurried and fiery zeal, unhallowed combinations, false representations, and a proselyting spirit, precipitate conduct and recklessness of consequences, always then mark its character, and show how much it is to be dreaded.

Such, to a lamentable extent, is the character

of the two great political parties that are struggling for the mastery in this land. To which of them shall we look for a spirit which reason and conscience can approve; for an organized system of measures which has any other object than to perpetuate itself; or for an elevated and disinterested policy? Which seeks not to sustain itself by the same unworthy means that are the reproach of its opposers? Which is the less artful and intriguing; which the less stimulated by the love of office and gain; which hesitates the least in aspersing the good and applauding the vile; and which is not incited by its partisan fury, to courses alike inconsistent with integrity, truth, and honour; or scruples at any thing, so it may carry its point?

During the first eight years of our national history, party politics had comparatively little influence either with the government or the people. But at the present day, the nation is divided into parties from habit. What one party approves, the other looks upon with a watchful and jealous eye. No man in power, and no aspirant for office ventures to presume that his opponents may be influenced by honest principles. It is not a single question on which the spirit of party exerts its influence, but every question; nor is it a single skirmish or campaign, but a continuous war, and an unbroken cannonade. Almost every man in the community is marked by his party. There is not a ward in our cities, nor a school district in our interior, but is searched and scoured, in order to make out a register of these political combatants,

and give them their instructions for the cruel onset. I say the *cruel* onset, because the land bleeds under it; age, in its retirement, weeps over it; and men in every station, be their present character and past services what they may, are the victims of its fury. Its influence is felt in the voluntary associations of men, that are formed for the purpose of doing good; in the corporations for business and profit; in the institutions of learning, and in the church of God. It has more power in our national and state councils, than any other principle of action. Men are elevated to the highest office, and lugged into the lowest, purely for party purposes. Where offices are wanting to subserve these ends, they are created; and where they are too many, are abolished. Most, if not all the measures of the government are devised and adopted with a view to party interests; and the very laws of the land which ought always to be framed under solemn and religious responsibility, are enacted and repealed to subserve the same ends.

Not a few, who are believed to be men of principle on other subjects, seem to take leave of their consciences the moment they throw themselves within the sphere of political agitation. With few exceptions, they are chained to their party, and no sense even of their sacred religion dissolves the bond. There are mournful defections from the law of God, in professedly good men of both political schools; and they have been a grief of heart to the church, and a stumbling-block to the world. It is difficult to speak of the paramount influence of

this party zeal in good men. It is a sort of moral hallucination. There are those who seem to be infatuated by it; nor is it possible for us to look upon this spirit of party, except as a dark cloud in our horizon, and one which so overspreads our sky as to fill us with apprehension.

2. Another indication of danger is the pervading influence of immoral principle.

Moral principle is the same thing everywhere. It has its standard, and it is unchanging; it has its laws, and they have weight and importance enough to be controlling. It is not one thing in the Bible and another in the Statute Book; one thing in the Church, and another in the State; one thing in the Pulpit, and another in the Senate Chamber. It is the least fickle, and the most unchanging thing in the world. In the closet and at the ballot box, in the family and on the exchange, in office and out of office, it is the same immovable principle. Time, place and circumstances cannot alter it. Gold cannot bribe it; poverty cannot ensnare it; bankruptcy can never make it bankrupt. It is not like a vane upon the top of a spire, for the purpose of showing which way the wind blows; but like the needle, notwithstanding the agitations of the storm, always reposing in that point where truth and duty exert their magnet power. In matters of indifference, it is all things to all men; while on every question of truth and rectitude, nothing moves it from its straightforward course. Obloquy aims its envenomed shafts at it, but it neither stops nor tires. In the even and unruffled course of events,

it is tranquil; and if amid more unequal and convulsing scenes it frowns and is agitated, it is because it is summoning its strength for conflict. Hope cannot make it pliable; test it as it will, fear does but evince its firmness; and all human changes make not half the impression upon it which the boisterous sea makes upon the rocky shore.

In political, as well as moral science, moral principle is the love of right; the pursuit of truth and duty, aiming at the public weal, in distinction from individual, or local interests. Every man knows what it is, because he has a conscience. It is not serving one's self by serving the State; but it is serving the State irrespective of one's self, and it may be in opposition to its acknowledged claims. It is a principle of amazing power. Other principles of action there are, strong and impassioned, but this is the highest and most impelling that ever swayed the human bosom, because it finds its motives and sanction in the indulgence and expression of the purest and loftiest affections, and its repose in an approving conscience and an approving God. It is deeply to be regretted, that it is so much easier to tell what it is than where it is. Noble exemplifications of it were seen in the early periods of our history—more noble than have been seen since the day when Moses interceded for the nation of Israel, even though his own name were blotted out and forgotten among men. But would not the eye become wearied in searching for them in the modern annals of the American people?

If we look to public stations, where shall our thoughts rest for examples of high morality? Tested by a self-sacrificing virtue, how few are there that have occupied, or now occupy them, who are influenced either by the love of God or man! We may not hope to be a prosperous people, until we see a higher tone of moral sentiment imbuing our national and state councils, commanding the respect of the community, and sending down its influence upon all classes of men. When we see men occupying public stations, who regard the Holy Scriptures with contempt; trample under their feet the divine institutions; and in their mutual intercourse, in halls consecrated to rectitude and courtesy, act a part that would have disgraced a Vandal age; we cannot but feel some concern, at least, for the moral virtue of the community. Irreligion, immorality, and bad manners, can scarcely fail to contaminate the people, when the contagion descends from such sources. Iniquity in every form always maintains a descending progress. Its natural course is downward. Like the foul miasma, which first evaporates from low and impure grounds and then ascends to spread itself along the mountain side, it first ascends from the people to their legislators, and afterwards descends in condensed malignity from legislators to the people. The truth on this subject is too humiliating to be told. Low abuse becomes not high-minded men. Malignant and bloody threatening ill befits the councils of wisdom. The sacred chambers, where the fate of millions hangs in sus-

pense, are not the arena for profane revilings, personal encounter and gladiatorial show.

If from the private influence of men in public stations, we turn to the acts of legislative bodies themselves, we see evils too notorious to be denied, and too gross to be palliated. In times of excitement on questions of great public interest, men can be more safely trusted almost anywhere than in large deliberative bodies. Those who would recoil from dishonour and dishonesty in their individual capacity, are too often induced to dismiss this delicacy when their responsibilities become thus merged. We have not lived to see a human legislature decide that there is no God; but we have seen more than one decide, that his laws are of no binding force. Never was a law more clearly revealed, or of more universal obligation, than the law which denounces death to the murderer. When a state, solemnly and by legal enactment, arrays itself before the world against this high authority, it manifests an intrepidity which is indicative of any thing, rather than moral principle, and which it will one day bewail. Laws that shield the guilty cannot protect the innocent. The late Sir James McIntosh, than whom no judge was ever more tender of human life, and who has unhappily been referred to as advocating the abolition of all capital punishments, remarks, concerning the morals of India, that "such is its disregard for the lives of its subjects, that they do not think it worth their while to punish a murderer." We may look with a jealous eye upon the man who has so little regard to hu-

man life as to desire the murderer to live. It is the pretence of compassion, and dwells not in the bosom of that Being who is the "great and essential charity."

What shall be thought, also, of the modern doctrine of *repudiation*, adopted by some of the states of this Union, and advocated by so many of the people? It is no marvel, that in the judgment of the nations, American is no better than "Punic faith." It speaks well for the civilized world, that our foreign ambassadors are put to shame, and that our citizens in other lands would fain pass under another name. Had our forefathers been told that the time would so soon come, when any of the states of this confederation would, by recorded resolutions, disavow their own pecuniary engagements, the blush of shame would have covered their faces for this flagrant injustice, this horrid disgrace of their apostate descendants.

Turn now to the character of some portions of the public press. That the free expression of public sentiment is necessary to the existence of liberty, is an axiom too plain to require either proof or illustration. Our own government has wisely adopted the policy of extending the privileges of the press to the last limits that may comport with individual rights and the public safety. We have no Star Chamber, no High Commission Court, no Inquisition to prevent the expression, or suppress the influence of public opinion. The character of the press in this land is therefore no false exponent of its moral principles. This is specially true of the political

and newspaper press, because this is emphatically the press of the people. The people read it, support it, and by it their views are both formed and expressed. And who does not see, that, to a mournful extent, it is under a bad and immoral direction ; and does more to bring into contempt and ridicule the Word of God, to profane the Sabbath and cause it to be profaned, to conduct the young and the old to scenes of pollution and shame, and to corrupt and demoralize the community, even than the vilest productions that ever came from the pen of Voltaire, or Thomas Paine ? While it would be no proof of candour, indiscriminately to denounce it, it would be blindness, not to discover the rashness, the precipitancy, the unguarded, and, I am sorry to say, the disorganizing influence sometimes issuing even from those portions of it we would most commend. The thought does not always seem to be present to the minds of those who preside over the newspaper press, that they are exerting a weighty influence in forming the character of the nation, and wielding an engine of unmeasured power, either for weal, or for wo.

Nor has the combined influence of such causes as these been exerted without the most deleterious effect. We cannot look abroad upon the great community of business without seeing most melancholy instances of defection from moral virtue.—Men do wrong and defraud, not only with impunity, but almost without dishonour. Defalcations in public officers and monied institutions come crowding upon us week after week, and day after

day, and are so numerous that it is no easy matter to find honest men enough in whom the community has confidence, and to whom great and important interests may be confided. Men are no longer trusted than they are tried; and even what has been considered tried integrity has not always proved invulnerable. Promises scarcely excite the expectation that they will be fulfilled. There is no such thing as mutual confidence. Distrust and suspicion so pervade the land, that it is well nigh impossible even to equalize its currency. Deceit and dishonesty have become so common that they are looked for; and the intercourse between man and man, and one remote part of the land and another, is governed by this horrible jealousy. And what is worse, men professing godliness have not been altogether guiltless in this matter, nor always been sensible that sterling integrity is one of the brightest adornments of the Christian character.

I am not insensible that this is a dark and melancholy survey. We are proud of our Institutions; but our Institutions will not long remain what they are unless the people become better. The unhappy consequences of such a state of things, if not seasonably arrested, may be easily foreseen. Let this want of moral principle be continued a little longer, and a little farther extended, and we shall see property depreciate, because neither individual integrity, nor the laws of the land afford it any adequate protection. We shall see the unfortunate depressed, because they have no way of regaining public confidence; the nerves of honourable industry

paralyzed; the rich hoarding their remaining treasures and locking them up from the poor; and the poor arrayed against the rich, because they are driven to desperation. Men will become unsocial and selfish, malignant and cruel. Monied institutions will languish; domestic alliances will be few; and crime will be multiplied. Power will become right, and law and liberty will be trodden down in the streets. The nation will be "bankrupt in fortune and in fame;" and she that "was princess among the provinces shall become tributary."

With this want of moral principle, there is,

3. A growing spirit of insubordination.

The necessity of civil government is founded in the moral corruption of man. Such are the natural and strong tendencies of the human mind to evil, that no community is safe without a system of well-defined and legalized checks on human conduct.

To say nothing of the material, the entire intellectual universe is a governed universe. It has its Head, its subjects, its laws, its rewards and penalties. If we look to celestial existencies, there is a difference in natural endowments, a distinction in character and condition, by which one class is superior to another. The harmony, beauty, and happiness of their social relations depend upon their due and cheerful subordination. It is the same in this lower world—running through all the gradations of its social existence, from the family to the village, from the village to the state. No community can live without subjection to the "powers

that be." Their mutual relations forbid it; their natural and relative inequality forbid it; and the Supreme Lawgiver has made this subjection a solemn and religious duty.

There may be, and doubtless is a point beyond which submission to oppressive and tyrannical governments may not be extended, and where power is so unreasonable and despotic as to justify revolt and revolution. 'Though the most weighty responsibility rests upon a people in deciding upon this fearful crisis, it has existed, and may exist again. "Hazardous as the regimen is, the body politic may be so disordered in its functions, as to be constrained to resort to it." And when such a crisis comes, and patient recourse to legal remedies is had in vain, and further remonstrance is useless, a good man may bare his bosom to the shock, and resist unto blood.

But such an exigency can rarely if ever exist in this land. Our tendencies are all on the other side of the question; and make a powerful appeal to our honour in behalf of a respectful obedience to the laws. There are peculiar claims on us for subordination to our constituted authorities, in the very freedom of our political Institutions. Our rulers are our own, because we choose them. Our laws are our own, because we make them; and our Courts of Judicature are our own, because we appoint them. We are therefore bound to subordination by solemn compact. By the act of putting our rulers into power, we put ourselves out of power; by making our own laws, we bind ourselves to

be subject to law ; and by appointing one class of men to be the exclusive expounders, and another the exclusive executors of the law, we not only disclaim these high trusts, but pledge ourselves to be dutiful to those to whom they are committed. Insubordination is far more criminal in this land, than in lands where power is wrested from the people, rather than conferred by them, and more dangerous, because it is more criminal.

Thus far in the history of nations, the great contest has, for the most part, had respect to the royal prerogatives and the rights of the people. The American States have ever been the advocates of popular rights, in opposition to the high claims of men in power. Our fathers suffered and bled in defence of this great political truth ; and we ourselves have often listened to the story of its triumphs, and chanted them at the holiest altars. We reproach no man for these generous sentiments, because they are our own, and because we hope the time may never come when we may not express our attachment to them, in perfect consistency with our principles of subordination to law and government. But unhappily, men there are, who, while they are the uncompromising opposers of all needless restraints upon natural liberty, sometimes call in question those that are needful. It is an humbling and an alarming fact, that a uniform and rigorous government is in bad repute with the people. Insubordination is one of the traits of the American character. Scenes have taken place under our own observation, and in others of our large

cities, in which resistance to lawful authority has originated in the most trivial causes, and has been fostered and perpetuated, sometimes by local interests, sometimes by differences of political sentiment, and sometimes by questions touching the theory of moral obligation. Hence the clamour about the rights of man, as paramount to all constitutions and compacts. Hence the tumultuous conventions sitting in judgment upon the laws, and resolving on disobedience. Hence the arraignment and abuse of courts of justice. Hence the riots that have called forth the power of the civil arm. Hence the angry controversy about State Rights in one quarter, and the agitating question of Slavery in another; both of them menacing revolution and civil war. Hence, on the one hand, the bold assumption of the power of the law by an infuriated mob, and the illegal execution of men for crimes of which they were never convicted; and on the other, the attempts to bribe and intimidate the high functionaries of the law from executing its penalties after legal sentence and conviction. And all this too, without penalty, and almost without rebuke. Hence the clamours of the populace for redress from alleged evils by illegal measures, and the recent attempt, not without rapine and blood, in one of the states, to introduce a new order of things in its government, without regard to constitutional remedies. Hence the organized system of opposition to all civil authority, under the form of rabid Mormonism, everywhere preaching sedition, though baptized with the Christian name. And hence too, the spirit

of misrule in the Church of God, and that turmoil which is excited by her discipline, and that want of respect to her decisions which makes her the laughing-stock of the world.

These things all flow from one common source, and are part and parcel of that unhinging system which looses the bonds of public authority. The germ of this factious spirit may perhaps be found farther back than all are willing to acknowledge. It is the natural, though unhealthy growth of our free institutions, and is very easily engrafted upon them. It is not our courts and officers of justice alone that are embarrassed by it, but every parent, every teacher, every master mechanic, and every seminary of learning. The bonds of authority hang loosely around the rising generation, and little countenance is given to a rigorous discipline in any department of human life. Age, however venerable, is not respected, and few "rise up before the face of the old man." The absurd doctrine of liberty and equality has been so often instilled into the youthful mind, that the first act of revolt from parental government entitles a boy of eighteen to a standing among men of spirit and character; and the first contemptuous, declamatory avowal of opposition to good laws, and the most flagrant violation of the precept, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people," is a passport to political advancement. It is surprising to see how soon the love of liberty has degenerated into the spirit of insubordination. No, it is not surprising; I recall the words. Should it surprise us, that children who are taught

from their boyhood to aim at power, and to look to the chair of magistracy, should, in process of time, find it no difficult matter to persuade themselves that they have as much right to govern, as to be governed? Should it surprise us, that when you tell men that inequality and subordination are doctrines of despots, and that civil power is invested in every individual because he is one of the people, they are not long in coming to the conclusion that one man has as much right to be the judge of the laws, or the ruler of the nation, as another? Multitudes are just foolish enough to believe, that civil liberty, so far from being subordination to good laws, impartially executed, is exemption from the restraints of all law; and that so far from being a possible thing to be a loyal subject and yet be free, it is impossible to be free and yet be a loyal subject.

We tremble for the country when its loyalty trembles. We deplore nothing so much as one of those fearful crises created by days of trial. Of all nations on the earth, our internal peace depends upon our prosperity. While the American people would meet the fury of an external foe with a united and undaunted spirit, and stand "shoulder to shoulder" on the field of battle; there are turbulent spirits among us, who are the fit tools of faction the moment the day arrives when, by protracted internal embarrassments, they persuade themselves that as they have nothing to lose, so they may have much to gain by assailing the pillars of the government. Far distant be that day! This disloyal

spirit is the rock on which the Republic is in danger of being shipwrecked. It is but yesterday, and she grazed upon its projecting ledges; and even now, though thrown off by a favouring tide, we feel her heaving and staggering in the fierce eddy of its angry waters.

I will add,

4. Another ground of apprehension to this land is the influence of the Papal power.

Facts are stubborn things; and facts have transpired in the midst of ourselves and in other lands, with regard to the designs of Papal Rome, which furnish to all the friends of Protestant freedom in these States, powerful incentives of alarm and vigilance. I say nothing now of the religious doctrines and rites of the Papal church, Antichrist as it is, and ruinous as they are to the souls of men. I speak of it simply as a system destructive of civil liberty.

The two great contending powers in the world have long been the Papal Hierarchy, and the Kingdoms and States of Protestantism. Such is the great contest at the present day. In some respects Rome has greatly the advantage, in every stage of this controversy, because she is able to turn to good account the worst passions of men, and at the same time to become the keeper of their consciences. Among the mass of human society also, she has little to contend with, because she finds them much as she desires to keep them, ignorant, abject, and enslaved. While on the other hand, Protestantism makes no compromise with wickedness, and instead

of being satisfied with human servitude, rises only as she bears up with her the enslaved nations, and in every step of her progress, is actually struggling with the liberties of the world upon her shoulders.

With all these disadvantages, Protestantism has been on the advance, and until within a few years, Papacy has been on the decline. Men are rational, and the time must come when they will think and examine for themselves. Protestantism rests its claims on argument; while Rome, for a long period, has abandoned the field of fair discussion, and, because she has neither argument nor arms to sustain her, has recourse only to the pains and penalties of her discipline, and ventures into the field only under the covered way of her Propaganda. Protestantism, therefore, has made rapid strides within the last hundred years. Besides retaining the whole of Europe north of the Baltic—for there is not a Romish priest in Norway or Denmark, and but two in Sweden;—besides maintaining its overpowering supremacy in Germany, the Low Countries, and Switzerland, and being tolerated in Belgium and France; it has pushed its conquests into this New World, and through the combined literature, enterprise, liberty and commerce of the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, and those of our own land, exerts a commanding influence on the civil liberties of mankind. Our own days have been the witnesses of her triumphs, and the degradation of her foe. We ourselves have seen the Inquisition abolished; Italy conquered, Rome itself plundered and im-

poverished, and, strange to say, her presumptuous Pontiff so divested of all temporal power that the kings of the earth no longer tremble at the thunder of the Seven Hills.

In view of facts like these, not a few have eagerly, and perhaps prematurely come to the conclusion, that Rome has "received her deadly wound," and that the time is at hand when both "the Beast and the False Prophet shall go together into perdition." The prophecies of Daniel, it appears to me, do indeed teach us that no Infidel, or Pagan, or Antichristian power is ever again to rule over the earth. But while I rejoice in this confidence, I have yet to see that there remains not a severe and bitter conflict of the Protestant nations with Rome. It is undoubtedly a fact, that in all the Roman Catholic countries, except Italy and Spain, the Papal power is on the advance. Professed Protestants of loose and immoral character are becoming Catholics; while conversions to the Roman church are taking place among that anomalous multitude who were thrown off from it by the influence of Voltaire and the infidelity of the German Illuminati. There is also more attachment to the Catholic church among her own members than there was twenty years ago. As a body of men throughout the world, they have been called on by the Pope to offer special prayers in behalf of Protestant countries; and extensive organizations of young men have recently been formed in Europe for more systematic effort for the conversion of the young. Romanism has increasing influence

with the government in Catholic countries; and subordinate magistrates are more frequently and boldly throwing obstacles in the way of Protestantism. It is well ascertained, that the Catholics are resolved on establishing a mission in every part of the world where the Protestants have gone before them, and are giving more to the cause of missions than they have for a long time been wont to bestow. In Belgium the whole system of public schools is now in the hands of the Catholics; while in some of the cantons of Switzerland, they are beginning to feel their strength, and to meditate plans of revolution. In Britain, too, the Oxford heresy has made such rapid strides toward Rome, that a large body of the evangelical clergy are seriously contemplating a secession from the Established church; while in this land where we dwell, prelates of that church are not wanting who are the bold advocates of some of the most obnoxious pretensions of the Papal church. Nor is it any difficult matter to predict what sort of influence a portion of the Episcopal church in these States will exert, when the crisis comes on which the destinies of Protestantism are suspended.

Nor is this all. While weakness and decay are by no means so visible in the features of Rome in the Eastern World, as they have been within half a century, on this Western Continent she has passed the period of her infancy and putting on the vigour of manhood. Europe, groaning under an overburdened, starving, and tumultuous population, has already disgorged upon these shores such

a flood of Catholic influence as to be felt in every department of the government. And what is marvellous to tell, though the principles and history of Rome show her to be the most aristocratic community in the world, she is here the passionate champion of liberty ; and though in her own land, she is arrayed in scarlet, she here lays aside her robes for the plain garb of republican simplicity. Hitherto she has walked softly and silently, and aimed principally at alluring the young. She has felt her way, till she finds herself standing on solid ground ; and now she is everywhere extending her institutions, and boldly sending up her voice into our legislative councils.

Especially has she fixed her eye upon that garden of the world, the "Great West." The plains of the Arno and the Tiber she is exchanging for the prairies of the Missouri and the Mississippi ; and for the native air of her own Pyrenees, Jura, and Alps, she is breathing the atmosphere bounded by the Alleghany and the Rocky Mountains. Throughout all that fertile valley, the day of her power is just begun. She has avowed her purpose of possessing this promised land ; crowned heads and powerful associations are in alliance with her in this design ; the popular sentiment of the Catholic nations falls in with it ; here her last struggle with Protestantism is probably to be maintained, and the last battle for freedom and the rights of man to be fought.

We do not say that in these things the Catholics are attempting any thing incompatible with their

civil rights, as recognized by the American people. And here is the secret of their strength, and our danger. The laws of the land deny them nothing as citizens; while what is cheerfully awarded to them as citizens, they make use of only as Romanists. Nay more. Not satisfied with the same civil rights we ourselves enjoy, they are already claiming immunities which the laws give to no other denomination, and making these claims the rallying standard of their political influence. While we, as Protestants, are exhausting our energies against one another, theirs are concentrated in favor of Rome. In the political dissensions of Protestants, Rome even now holds the balance of power; and in the use of the elective franchise, may decide every great political question, and almost upon her own terms. And who can be so demented as to suppose that these terms will not be available to the Roman See?

Do any ask, Where is the danger of all this? I can only say, the question surprises me. Are not the liberties of the country put in jeopardy by a community which affirms that the Pope possesses the divine right of civil government; that faith is not to be kept with Protestants; that a Protestant cannot be witness; and that the oath of allegiance to any other power than the Romish Hierarchy is not binding? These are principles which Rome avows by the decrees of her Popes and Councils, and which she has, I know not whether to say, the weakness or the effrontery, to pronounce infallible. And because she pronounces them infallible, they are paramount with every Romanist, in what-

ever land he is found. Believe it or not, as we may, Papists will be found true to the doctrine of infallibility. Any other doctrine is fatal to their system. What were once the principles of that apostate community are now its principles, nor do we need to be informed that they have ever proved unfriendly to personal rights, and the equal administration of law and justice. We cannot be hoodwinked by smooth professions against the subtle invasions of such political heresy. Human nature is the same now which it always has been; and so is Popery. Principles are not such tame and inert things as they are sometimes regarded; they mould the spirit, form the designs, control the conduct, and constitute the character. You cannot separate them from the man, any more than you can tear asunder the man from himself. We are greatly deceived, if it is possible for a man to be a thorough Papist, and, in any great conflict of civil liberty with the Roman church, prove himself the friend of freedom. Individual Catholics there have been in the midst of us, whose hearty allegiance to the Papal Hierarchy is more than doubtful, who have showed themselves freemen; and there are such in the midst of us still. But as a class of men, Papists are at the bidding of their Priests, and their Priests at the bidding of Rome.

I once heard the question agitated by a company of very intelligent men, whether the system of caste in India, or the policy of Rome, were the master-piece of the great adversary. And very properly, as it seemed to me, the question was decided

in favor of Rome. The designs of Rome are not limited to a single empire, but include the race under every parallel of latitude, and every form of government. Her stake is deep. Her game is high ; and she is playing for nations. She spreads her great drag-net over the marshes and miry places of the earth, and gathers all manner of creeping things ; and then she throws it over crowns and thrones. She aims chiefly at controlling human governments. She has her spies at every Court, and every University in Europe, and almost every town of the Hanseatic Confederacy ; nor is there a treaty, nor any measure of universal interest, but she watches it with a jealous eye.

One access to power in this land she has, and only one. And it is that avenue, which like the breach in the wall of Jerusalem discovered by Titus, invites the destroyer, and shows him a divided people. The policy of Rome is the very machinery which the demon of Party in the midst of us desires, in order to bring about those gradual changes in principle and legislation which will strike a fatal blow at our liberties. And though its influence is gradual, it is strong. It is like the first movings of the avalanche, and we be to all beneath it. It is first like the smoke, and then like the lava of its own Vesuvius, burning over the rich and beautiful soil, and leaving not a green spot for the blasted trunk of freedom to stand upon. In a little while, without a more concerted union of Protestant influence, the evil we prognosticate will have done its work. There will be no antidote to the mischief.

The thought and eloquence of the Senate Chamber cannot arrest it; the Press cannot arrest it; the Pulpit will be silenced; and the Bible, as it recently has been, will be consigned to the flames. Nay, though it is adding lamentation upon lamentation, the evil is in a measure even now done.— A free people already accept their suffrages at the altars of the Papacy, and the Empire State, so jealous of its own Clergy, pays its homage at St. Peter's. If we wake not Rome carries the day. The Republic is lost.

Such are some of the dangers which threaten the American people. Nor may we dwell any longer on the dark shades of this sombre outline. It will be a relief to your minds, as I am sure it is to my own, to call your attention,

II. To the refuge from these dangers, and to some of the grounds of hope for the nation, notwithstanding these threatening evils.

On this part of our subject, I have no systems of human policy, no counsels of human wisdom to unfold. Creatures are of little account at such a day as this. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." We shall not find trees planted by the rivers of water, amid the heath of the desert. The storm that lowers over the land is not to be averted by the ingenuity, or power of man. If the destruction of this nation does not swell the catalogue of ruined Republics, it will be because "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." We look around us, and every day is a day of disappointment to

thousands. Human events are constantly taking a new and unexpected turn; and the man that knows not, feels not, rejoices not that God is on the throne, may see the hand of enchantment which his imagination has depicted lighting up our prospects, only inscribing our doom. And yet are there indices to hope, hope in the God of nations, because,

1. This great and good Being possesses all the resources that are adequate to our security and advancement.

In a day, when so few think of God, and when the high and mighty of this world forget that he ruleth in the midst of the earth, it is an unutterable consolation to know that no time and no place limits his dominion. His ever wakeful eye is upon every change of human affairs; and nothing is concealed or undirected by him, that takes place among men, or that is projected by the machinations of human folly and wickedness. If a partisan spirit inflames the minds of the people; if the land is threatened with a deluge of immoral principles; if turbulence and faction roar around us like the waves of the sea; if unhallowed conspiracies, baptized with the Christian name, menace our liberties; it is with Him to stay the flood, to still the tumult of the people, to restrain the spirit of party, and to preserve and perpetuate our dearest interests against the encroachments of the intriguing foe.

Never, since the struggles of the Revolution, did the American people more need the interposition of almighty and benevolent Providence, than at the

present day. The nation has reached a crisis in which she requires commanding intellect to influence her counsels, and more commanding virtue to concentrate her confidence. It is not at all improbable, from the signs of the times, that influences hitherto unfelt are about to be exerted on our destinies; that old combinations are about to be dissolved, and new ones formed, and principles of policy adopted that may unite this now disunited republic in their true interests. And who, but the God who is above us, is able to show us what these true interests are, or amalgamate and combine the jarring views, and more jarring passions of this great and free people? What measures he will mercifully disclose we do not know; it is a relief to know that he is able to adopt those that shall result in our security and honour. The ten thousand springs of thought and action that are now at work throughout this wide territory, may as easily be arranged and directed by him to our good, as the pliant willow is bent by the gentle breeze. And if to the eye of reason this appears improbable, there are other eyes to which it is the only preventive of our ruin.

2. With God alone are the means by which these resources may be made available to the nation.

These means, in few words, are the moral virtue of the people. The evils we fear can be counteracted only by this influence; nor is there but this refuge from the ruin of our national character and hopes.

It can scarcely be necessary to say, that it is vain to look for moral principle among any

people, without religious principle. The character that is essential to national prosperity is engrafted upon the religion of the Bible. Nothing else can govern the wayward mind, and impetuous passions of the human heart. Free institutions cannot do it; a wholesome legislation cannot do it; and no advanced state of the sciences and the arts can do it. Free institutions are nothing but a curse where the religion of the Bible is wanting. The best code of laws is of little avail where there are not integrity and virtue in the people to sustain them; nor without that virtue and integrity, is it possible for good laws to be enacted. And we must be slow to learn, if we have not seen that progress in arts and sciences, unattended with religious influence, only renders men more inventive in wickedness. Politicians have not been slow to appreciate the influence of false religions; but, with few exceptions, they have never given the religion of the Bible its appropriate place.

In nations, as well as in men, moral virtue is of divine original. But for the truth and Spirit of God, it would find no access to the counsels that control the destiny of nations, no residence in our world. Speculative atheism, and practical ungodliness, bad faith and bad morals are everywhere rife, from men in power to meaner men, where a community is not under the restraining, subduing influence of the truth of God and the Spirit of his grace. The God of heaven must give these to the American people, else are they far better fitted to be portioned out as the vassals of some

feudal lord, than to be the responsible citizens of a free government.

The American people, perhaps more than any other nation, requires the strong grasp of religious truth. They are not as easily excited as some nations, but they are exposed to strong and powerful excitement. We cannot rely upon any safety valve to let off the steam when once it is up. Our safety lies in keeping down, and controlling the fires within, or the colossal machinery will burst, and piece after piece of the mighty fabric will fall. We are just the people, fitted for revolutions of no common kind, unless we are bound together into one great brotherhood by the cords of heaven-descended truth and a heaven-imparted love.

The hope of the American people therefore is in the free and glorified course of God's truth ; distributed in the Bible, proclaimed from the pulpit, published in an elevated and sanctified literature, far off and near, and to all ages and orders of men. It is in the lives of true men, pure men, honest men, self-denying men, whose example and influence are more persuasive than all the eloquence of the press, or the pulpit. It is in the piety of churches and families, and in the purity and religious character of our public schools and colleges. It is in the voice of truth and godliness uttered in the halls of legislation, and revered on the bench of justice. There is a power in the truth of God, thus disseminated, and demonstrated thus, to renovate the nation. It " drops as the rain, and distils as the dew ; as the small rain upon the tender

herb ; and as showers upon the grass." Like the humid atmosphere of the Spring, it insinuates itself into every tree, and plant, and leaf, and filament ; and prepares it for the Sun of righteousness when he rises with healing in his beams ; and like the prophetic waters that went out from Jerusalem, "giving life to every thing that moveth wherever they come."

Heaven give us his truth and Spirit, and the land is safe. The resources of his providence and grace are then our own. We shall be the proper subjects for freedom, and not only endure our liberties, but beckon to distant lands to come and rest under the shadow of our wings.

To make this hope more welcome, I remark,—

3. These resources, and these means, by which they are made available, are controlled by prayer.

There are those who may smile when I utter this thought. But we may not abandon our hopes for the nation, for the sneers of men who have never made the living God their refuge.

Scattered and divided to her own weakness and shame, as the church is in this land ; called by a thousand names, and the reproach and contumely of the nation for her sectarian collisions and mutual jealousies ; she, nevertheless, comprises within her different compartments a great multitude who fear God and love his Son. Were it but for their own peace and comfort, in the present aspect of the nation, they may well greet the invitation, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself

for a little season, until the indignation be overpast." It is an unutterable privilege to know that our refuge is in God; to retire from these external commotions; to be more with Him and less with the world, until the storm is gone by. In days when men's hearts "are failing them for fear," there is a safety in this calm retreat which the ephemeral convulsions of time cannot disturb.

But it is not to their own peace and comfort alone, that this thought addresses itself. Prayer possesses untold power. It has been beautifully said, "It moves the hand that moves the world." It can accomplish any thing, because he who hears and answers it can accomplish any thing. It is omnipotent for good, because God is omnipotent. The men of prayer cannot indeed form the character of this land, and direct its policy as they please; they cannot reform its manners, nor protect it against those internal causes of decay, of such dark foreboding; and they are equally powerless to evangelize it by the omnipotence of truth. But the only power in the universe that is adequate to these results is accessible to their humble and unwearied supplications. Sodom and the cities of the plain might have remained to this day, had they contained ten men of prayer. Israel would have been blotted out from being a nation on the day they bowed before the golden calf, but for the prayers of a single man. But for the entreaties of her suppliant prince, Jerusalem had been desolated by the destroying angel, centuries before she was devoured by the Roman eagle.

Nor let it be forgotten that the greatest moral reformation that ever took place among men, and one that triumphed over the darkness of paganism, the philosophy of the schools, and the opposing power of human governments, and that is destined to renovate the race; began in the prayers of one hundred and twenty persons, once assembled in an upper chamber in the capital of Judea.

It is no easy matter to ruin a country protected by prayer. France and Britain have now, and long have had, sins enough upon their governments, to have sunk them both like a millstone into the sea, but for the supplications of a chosen people in the midst of them. So has it been with this land. Judgments that were even at our doors, within your recollection and mine, have been often delayed by the intercessions of God's people, and by those days of prayer when the nation bowed in sackcloth, and her priests stood between the porch and the altar, and cried, "Spare thy people, O God, and give not thine heritage to reproach."

Our fathers called upon God and he heard them. Their early history is full of affecting instances of the power of prayer. When they were hungry, they looked to Him who hears the ravens when they cry, and He fed them. They buried the tomahawk; they quenched the flames; they staid the floods by prayer. They vanquished armies, and made proud Sachems tremble on their thrones. They unlocked the heavens to the wonder of the adoring savage, who turned from the vanities of the heathen to Him who maketh rain. And

what is more, they subdued the pride and arrogance of man, and controlled his spirit, and changed his counsels by prayer. Prayer can accomplish for this land, what the wisdom of her statesmen and the prowess of her arms can never accomplish. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Prayer made the nation what it was in the zenith of her prosperity; and it must still have a place, among those great moral causes which fix the destiny of nations, in restoring and perpetuating its departed glory.

Were this the "Age of Prayer," it would not be an age of such foreboding. Were every closet and every domestic altar, every sanctuary, and the ten thousand circles for prayer throughout the churches of every name, engaged in intercessions for the land we love; our fears would be tranquillized, and our hopes have unwonted cheerfulness and joy. The shadow of the cloud would still cover us by day, and the pillar of fire by night would direct our course. It is because the God of heaven has a people here whom he lives to protect and love, that we still have a name and a place on the earth. And if this agitated and disheartened nation should be sufficiently awake to her dangers and her hopes to be brought to their knees, all will be well.

I may not close without adding another thought, and one which gives interest and emphasis to all that has been uttered. It is,

4. That in the development of his purposes thus far toward the American people, there are rea-

sons for the hope that the God of heaven will not abandon us.

I do not stand in this place as the apologist for my country's sins. I know that she deserves to be abandoned to the unnatural crime of being the author of her own destruction, and lamenting, too late, the fearful deeds of guilt and horror which her own hands have perpetrated. Should we be more severely chastised than we have been, we may well accept the punishment of our iniquity in uncomplaining silence; and should we fall under the exterminating sentence of the avenging Deity, it would be but another lesson to the world, that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." There may be those who anticipate such a fall; but with all my fears, and notwithstanding the dangers which menace such a disaster, my own bosom is slow to sympathize with these trembling apprehensions.

The providence of God planted in this New World a noble vine. He "sifted three kingdoms, that he might sow the American wilderness with the choicest wheat." There was nothing fortuitous in the early settlement of the American colonies; but every thing that indicated, on the part of a benevolent Providence, a far-reaching design. In the attachment of the noble men engaged in this enterprise to the great principles of civil and religious liberty; for their intelligence, learning and piety, it would be difficult to find their equals in the same number of men among their descendants. It was not a nursling, that was transplanted on these shores, a feeble scion,

but a full grown tree ; and though the clouds have gathered above it, and its branches have been often scathed by the storm, the tears of men watered it, it was nurtured by the prayers of the holy, and blood, of which the world was not worthy, enriched its roots as they struck deep into the rocky soil. Tell me, ye sons and daughters of the Pilgrims, if, even now, when the tempest lowers, the decree is not written in heaven, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it?"

The prosperity of the American people has also, with a few short intermissions, been unexampled. Scarcely a hundred years have passed away, since France and Britain claimed the possession of the North American Continent, while within a much shorter period, the larger half of these United States was the uninvaded habitation of savage men.-- But the dense forest is now covered over with the abodes of wealth and splendor ; and a large and growing empire, studded with the lights of religion and science, takes the place of the benighted and retiring tribes of Paganism, who have left a land emulating in its resources the richest portions of the older hemisphere, and comprising a population of nearly twenty millions of freemen.

The apparent objects of our existence as a nation, have also for the most part stood abreast without prosperity. Here the oppressed of every land have found a home, where they have enjoyed the rewards of honest industry, the allurements of knowledge, and the protection of law.

The English Dissenter, the Scottish Covenanter, and the polished Huguenot, chased by edicts that shed blood to the horses' bridles, have here reposed in fearless tranquillity, and transmitted the savour of their honoured name to a long line of honoured descendants. And here too, the out-cast Jew, of whom the God of Abraham has said, "I will undo all that afflict thee," has found, what no nation on the earth besides gives him, unobstructed access to every civil immunity and religious privilege, and, if a native citizen, to the highest offices in the gift of the people.—Here the pure and undefiled religion of the cross has been established, and its sacred institutions honoured by law, in distinction from every form of Paganism, Mohammedanism, and the national and temporary ritual of the Levitical Code. Here the Holy Spirit has been largely and frequently poured from on high; and from this young world, as one of the selected centres of light and love, the angel having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth has gone forth to almost every unevangelized land.

Throughout all our history, too, there have been such special interpositions of the divine power and goodness, as have not only been the subject of grateful admiration to ourselves, but the wonder of the observant nations. Many a time have we been in great perplexity and alarm. The rivers where we have bathed in our boyhood, and the green glades which we have trodden in earlier years, have been the scenes of terrific collisions with the merciless

savages of the desert ; and though the faith of the nation is far from being preserved pure and untarnished toward their descendants, these scenes have passed away, and the war-whoop sounds its battle cry no more. We have also been conducted with safety and honour through one war with France, and two with Great Britain, in one of which the inequality of the parties was such as gave us no hope of success. At the commencement of this conflict, we had neither an organized regiment, nor a fortified town, nor a ship of war, nor money, nor arms, nor military stores. The researches of British literature and science, the extent of her commerce, the wisdom of her counsels, and her diplomatic skill, her abundant wealth, her far-famed jurisprudence, and the extent of her dominions, gave her the most enviable pre-eminence, and made her the terror of Europe. Such was her prowess in arms, that she had never been conquered in a single war since the days of William the Norman. But the bitter conflict was sustained for seven long years ; two entire armies of the enemy captured, and our Independence achieved. And if, in looking back upon our triumph, we are tempted to give way to the thought, that it encircles the brow of this infant Republic with a more verdant wreath than ever entwined the helmet of her exacting foe in the proudest days of Marlborough, or Wellington, we may not withhold the honour from Him who ruleth among the children of men, and by this great event, destined the American people to an enduring place among the nations. He

“turned our captivity as the streams of the south;” and has not only given us honour and renown, but extorted them even from the lips of our enemies. It is but little more than two centuries since our fathers found a home in this western wilderness; and now Britain herself has acknowledged before the world, that “their children constitute the most intelligent, and the most Christian Republic in the world.”

Nor ought it to be forgotten that the providence of God has often interposed when we were threatened with destruction from causes within ourselves. Scarcely were the struggles of the Revolution over, and the smoke of its burning disappeared in a clear sky, when internal dissensions threatened us with deeper horrors. Difficulties presented themselves in the organization of our Federal Government. The most powerful minds in the land were brought into anxious collision, and conflicting interests seemed for a while to forbid the hope that we should ever be a united people. And many a time, too, since this great question was amicably determined, we have been exposed to all the horrors of a civil war, and but for an invisible guardianship, “blood had touched blood.” There was a period in our history, also, when infidelity threatened to overwhelm us, and the false and latitudinarian philosophy of Europe seemed about to lay waste the superstructure which had been reared for distant generations. But the God of our fathers bowed his heavens, and by the remarkable interposition of his Spirit, lifted up a standard against

the enemy. And since our own times, a foe scarcely less to be dreaded, has secretly, and with almost resistless power, been undermining the foundations of our prosperity. The time was, when the nation seemed to be becoming a nation of drunkards. Intemperance was swallowing us up in its consuming flood. Its streams flowed ; its fires raged, and were burning over the land. But the God of heaven had decreed that we should not so soon become a lost nation. The Temperance Reformation is a movement unexampled in the history of the world ; and in the view of the most enlightened nations, does the country greater honour than all her victories.

And what means the clarion sound of that silver trumpet, which the men of peace have just blown through the length and breadth of two great Christian nations, filling every generous and benevolent bosom with joy ? We had trembled in apprehension of a conflict that would have made havoc of the lives of men ; that would have blighted the fruits of industry ; that would have arrested the progress of knowledge and charity by the din of arms ; that would have made both nations worse, and no the better ; and that could not have failed to arrest the advancement of true religion in the world, and left an indelible reproach upon the Christian name. But he who sitteth King forever, has blessed the land with peace. " It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

I may not enlarge on this part of my subject. Many a time have we stood on the brink of a pre-

cipice, when the hand of the Omnipotent Preserver has been reached forth to keep us from falling. God himself has "brought us out into a large and wealthy place." He has watched over us; guarded us as the apple of his eye; and "having obtained help of him, we continue to the present day." Come see the works of the Lord. "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks; unto thee do we give thanks; for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare."

And now we ask, in the language of one of other times, "If the Lord had been pleased to destroy us, would he have showed us such things as these?" Has he been wont to do so to those whom he has thus distinguished? Is there no reason to hope, that the moral causes to which he has given an impulse in this land, and which he is still directing, have not as yet finished the work which he has given them to do? Are there no streaks of light in our horizon, and no bright signs of the times, notwithstanding all the darkness? And may not the day of mercy be dawning upon our world, and the predicted period of Zion's glory be too near, for this land to be abandoned of God and destroyed?

If these things are so, nothing may dissuade us from our hope in God for the American people. The resources that are necessary to our security and advancement are treasured up in him; with him are the means by which they may be made available to ourselves; these means and these resources are under the control of prayer; while in the develop-

ment of his purposes thus far toward us as a people, there are strong reasons for hoping that he will still regard us with mercy.

Such, my respected auditors, are the dangers, and such the hopes of the American people. If as a people we appreciate them both, and act consistently under their influence, our hopes will far outweigh our fears. Let us appreciate them, and let us so conduct ourselves! Let us do this, and demoralizing principles will no longer exult in the inaction of the virtuous; insubordination will cower before the majesty of law; and Rome will no longer triumph, because her strength lies in the division and inertness of Protestants. The land will no longer tremble with schisms of such an alarming aspect, but animosities will be allayed, and divisions healed. The zeal of party spirit will become cool, and that phrensy will abate which makes so many blind to the dangers which threaten us. We shall be clothed with the dignity, the beauty, the adornment, the strength of that spirit of mutual forbearance and conciliation, which will be the consolation of our friends, the defeat of our enemies, and approved by Heaven. The God of peace will cause his favour to rest upon us "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." Instead of following the fate of lost republics, we shall remain a monument to succeeding ages that "God is our refuge and strength." From lofty towers of Zion, everywhere planted over this Western World, the lips of our children and their children, long after

yours and mine shall have mouldered in the dust, shall say to this chosen land, "The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice and mountain of holiness!" and the thanksgivings which we offer in his courts to-day, and for which we have such abundant cause, will be perpetuated by future times, and other men will take up the Hallelujah Chorus, and "fall down and worship Him that liveth forever and ever."

2 Apr. 1872.

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